Readings in Contemporary Literary Theory: Eco-Criticism

Class code  ENVST-UA 9510; ENGL-UA9TBA

Instructor Details  Dr Rebecca Giggs
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Consultations: 1—2 pm Tuesdays

Class Details  Classes: Seminars will be held in Science House in Room 303 from 2:00pm to 5:00pm on Tuesdays. Seminar 1 will run from 2:00pm—3:30pm, Seminar 2 from 3:30pm—5:00pm. There will be a short break between the Seminars.

Prerequisites  None

Class Description  How do we read ‘nature’? Is there a ‘natural’ way to understand the ‘real’? This course explores issues in the textual mapping of relationships between the environmental, the ecological and the semiotic. It assumes that however ‘natural’ nature itself may be, the human understanding of it is necessarily constructed. We trace the origins and development of key tropes in ecological philosophy: including wilderness, pastoral, pollution and apocalypse. Principle texts in this course include American and Australian novels, films and documentaries, read alongside supplementary sources in literary, audio and artistic mediums. We ask how literature—one of the richest arenas for the practice of human imagination—does, has, or could shape environmental thought and action. How does the non-human world enter into literature? What are the historical and structural obstacles to admitting different forms of consciousness into text? What literary genres and styles are called forth by the huge ecological challenges of our times?

This course is run in a seminar style, over two sessions per week. There is a minimum attendance requirement, and students will also be graded on their seminar participation (see “assessment”).

Desired Outcomes  At the successful completion of this course, students will be able to demonstrate the following outcomes:

- Understand the complex and various representations of nature;
• Adopt appropriate critical strategies to analyse the ideological properties of the representation of nature, ecology and environmentalism;

• Develop a critical understanding and engagement with different generic and formal modes of construction—ideas of mysticism and innate meaningfulness, ecological disaster and threat, nature as gendered, apocalyptic visions and nature as the site of technological mediation;

• The ability to enhance their reading, writing, research and oral presentation skills; and

• The ability to engage with secondary critical reading material by assessing the scholarly arguments that might contribute to their intellectual projects and responses.

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1. Class Work

» Attendance and punctuality—more than two absences will result in a lowering of your final grade.

» Readings and screenings must be completed before the class for which they are assigned. Always bring copies of the assigned material to class.

» Thoughtful and energetic participation in class discussions. This will be possible only if you have read assigned materials actively, recording your main ideas and responses, and developing relevant questions. You are also encouraged to undertake your own independent research, and to share this endeavour with your colleagues as part of the class discussion (a process which is formalised in regards to your in-class presentation, detailed below).

» There a number of ‘informal’ assignments set during the course—opportunities for self-directed research or excursions into the local environment. These assignments are not directly assessed, but form a part of the class work component of the course. Where an assignment is informal, it is discretionary, and will only serve to improve your understanding and engagement with the principle texts or ideas of the course. Informal assignments may be fed into your analytical papers, and/or can form the basis of a research essay.
2. Two Analytical Papers

> Two analytical papers are due throughout the course; the first one on the Tuesday of Week 6 (09 October 2012), and the second on the Tuesday of Week 12 (20 November 2012). As with all assessments you may hand these analytical papers in earlier than the due date, should you wish to.
> Each is worth 10% of your final grade.
> Analytical papers are to be 4 pages long only, and in size 11 font, with decent margins and spacing (be kind to your eyes, as well as your marker’s).
> Analytical papers are to be appropriately referenced, and a bibliography provided.
> The papers are a response to one theme or text of the course: a chance for you to go deeper with a specific question, or area of inquiry. For example, you may want to examine a text that we have looked at in one section of the course, with respect to a different section of the course (e.g. *The Last Wave* as an apocalypse narrative, or a response to the uncanniness of climate change, rather than a text about the eco-mythology of the beach); or you might want to carve off a niche area of theory to develop further.
> It will be helpful to you, when you come to writing your analytical papers, if you have taken the time to record notes from your readings and in-class dialogues.
> A full marking criteria will be provided to you closer to the due date, and (as always) it will be useful to discuss the topics for your analytical papers with your lecturer.
> As a guide, the desired outcomes you should hope to achieve in your analytical papers include:
  - A willingness and ability to address a topic/idea/issue in relation to the texts and themes of the course;
  - Clear thought, expression and argument;
  - An intelligent set-up of the analytical paper’s aims;
  - Originality of work;
  - The analytical paper should demonstrably meet what it sets out to achieve;
  - Critical engagement with the themes/ideas/texts that you choose to discuss;
  - Preparedness to take ‘risks’, to initiate and engage with intellectual ‘discoveries’; and
  - Evidence of research: you should have not only read and incorporated ‘secondary’ readings into your work, but also critically evaluated them.

3. In-Class Presentation

> In-class presentations will be assigned in the second seminar of the course.
Please consider which area you would like to present on, and come to class with more than one preference.

- In-class presentations will be held from Week 6 to Week 13, in the second-half of the Tuesday seminar.
- The week before your presentation (not the day before!), find, copy, and assign for reading to your colleagues, either one article or one literary work (an excerpt that might be readable within half an hour) that is related to your topic.
- Your presentation must frame these two items with information about your topic-area, and must conclude with a question for the class to discuss.
- The whole presentation (including setting up PowerPoint, videos, giving out handouts: but excluding class discussion) must be 10-15 minutes maximum.
- A full marking criteria will be provided to you closer to the due date. Credit will be given for sensible section of reading materials, and creativity in presentation style.

4. Research Essay

- Your final assessment is a research essay of 4,000 words, due at the end of Week 14 (04 December 2012).
- The topic of the essay will be of your choosing, but you are required to have this topic approved by your lecturer by Week 9 (30 October 2012 or earlier).
- Your topic must engage with at least one of the principle texts discussed throughout the ecocriticism course.
- You have the option of receiving feedback on an earlier draft of your research essay, should you submit it on or before 06 November 2012 (Week 10).
- Draft submission and feedback is not compulsory, but it is an opportunity for you strengthen your essay through successive reworks, according to comments provided by your lecturer.
- Your lecturer will not “copy edit” your essay in its draft form, so it is important that you maintain clarity of expression, grammar, spelling and academic referencing conventions throughout (even if what you provide is only an essay ‘skeleton’ at the draft phase).
- Research essays must be appropriately referenced and a bibliography provided.
- A full marking criteria will be provided to you closer to the due date but as a general guide, the outcomes you should achieve and demonstrate in your research essay are—
  - A clear definition of your particular topic;
  - A clear identification of the key issues and problems the topic entails;
  - A clear sense of the essay’s aims;
  - An effort to produce original work, which includes a preparedness to take ‘risks’ in your thinking;
  - A demonstration that the essay meets what it sets out to achieve;
  - Evidence of the carrying out of research;
A critical engagement with the various arguments and opinions within the field/topic you have chosen to research (evidence for this is not only judged by the sophistication and clarity of your arguments, but also by the references and bibliography you include with your work, and the degree to which you critical evaluate your research);

- Well-informed and supported conclusions; and
- A technically well presented project (intelligible, concisely argued, and well written).

Note that due dates are NOT NEGOTIABLE. All written submissions (analytical papers and research essays) are to be handed to your lecturer at the end of the class when they are due. Written assignments must be printed out, stapled, and the pages numbered. They are not to be emailed, or handed to other NYU staff members. It is essential that you keep electronic copies and backups of all your work.

Failure to submit or fulfil any required course component will result in failure of the class.

**Assessment Expectations**

**Grade A:** Excellent performance showing a thorough knowledge and understanding of the topics of the course; all work includes clear, logical explanations, insight, and original thought and reasoning. Written work is of a highly sophisticated standard.

**Grade B:** Good performance with general knowledge and understanding of the topics; all work includes general analysis and coherent explanations showing some independent reasoning, reading and research. Written work is of a superior standard.

**Grade C:** Satisfactory performance with some broad explanation and reasoning; the work will typically demonstrate an understanding of the course on a basic level. Written work is of an acceptable standard.

**Grade D:** Passable performance showing a general and superficial understanding of the course’s topics; work lacks satisfactory insight, analysis or reasoned explanations. Written work is of a basic standard.

**Grade F:** Unsatisfactory performance in all assessed criteria. Written work is weak, unfinished or unsubmitted.

**Grade conversion**

NYU Sydney uses the following scale of numerical equivalents to letter grades:

- A =94-100
- A- =90-93
- B+ =87-89
- B =84-86
- B- =80-83
- C+ =77-79
- C =74-76
- C- =70-73
D+ = 67-69
D  = 65-66
F  = below 65

Where no specific numerical equivalent is assigned to a letter grade by the class teacher, the mid point of the range will be used in calculating the final class grade (except in the A range, where 95.5 will be used).

**Grading Policy**

NYU Sydney aims to have grading standards and results similar to those that prevail at Washington Square. At the College of Arts and Sciences, roughly 39% of all final grades are in the B+ to B- range, and 50% in the A/A- range.

We have therefore adopted the following grading guideline: in any non-Stern course, class teachers should try to insure that no more than 50% of the class receives an A or A-. (Stern has a different grading policy that we follow in all Stern courses).

A guideline is not a curve. A guideline is just that: it gives an ideal benchmark for the distribution of grades towards which we work.

**Attendance Policy**

NYU Sydney has a strict policy about course attendance for students. Faculty will not give students permission to be absent for any reason. Students should contact their instructors to catch up on missed work but should *not* approach them for excused absences.

All non-medical absence requests must be presented by the student to the Assistant Director, Academic Programs. Non-medical requests should be made in advance of the intended absence. All medical-based absence requests MUST be presented to the Student Life Coordinator. In the case of illness, the student should contact the Student Life Coordinator within three days of the absence or as soon as practicable and provide medical documentation. Faculty will be informed of excused absences by the Student Life staff and Assistant Director, Academic Programs. Any absences of which faculty have not been informed by the NYU Sydney staff will be presumed to be unexcused.

Students are expected to arrive to class promptly both at the start of class and after breaks. Arriving more than 10 minutes late or leaving more than 10 minutes early will be considered an unexcused absence.

This attendance policy also applies for classes involving a field trip or other off-campus visit. It is the student’s responsibility to arrive at the agreed meeting point on time.

The faculty will report all unexcused absences to the Assistant Director, Academic Programs, and students’ final grades will be negatively impacted by each such absence. Each unexcused absence will result in the deduction of 3 percentage points from the final grade. More than two unexcused absences will result in failure of the course.

There will be no adjustment of attendance records after the end of the semester. If you wish to contest an unexcused absence, you must do so before you leave Sydney. Contact the Assistant Director, Academic Programs to discuss the attendance record as soon as you think there may be a discrepancy about your attendance in class on a given day.
Students observing a religious holiday during regularly scheduled class time are entitled to miss class without any penalty to their grade. **This is for the holiday only and does not include the days of travel that may come before and/or after the holiday.**

Students must notify their professor and the Assistant Director, Academic Programs in writing via email one week in advance before being absent for this purpose.

**Late Submission of Work**

Written work due in class must be submitted during class time to your instructor.

Late work should be submitted in person to the Assistant Director, Academic Programs during regular office hours (9:30-5:00, Monday-Friday). You must also submit an electronic copy of late written work to the Assistant Director, Academic Programs – megan.carrigy@nyu.edu - for submission to Turn-it-in.

The Assistant Director, Academic Programs will mark down the date and time of submission in the presence of the student. In the absence of the Assistant Director, Academic Programs, another member of the administrative staff can accept the work in person, following the same protocol.

Work submitted after the submission time without an agreed extension receives a penalty of 2 points on the 100-point scale for each day the work is late.

Written work submitted beyond five (5) weekdays after the submission date without an agreed extension fails and is given a zero.

**Plagiarism Policy**

The academic standards of New York University apply to all coursework at NYU Sydney. NYU Sydney policies are in accordance with New York University’s plagiarism policy. The presentation of another person’s words, ideas, judgment, images or data as though they were your own, whether intentionally or unintentionally, constitutes an act of plagiarism.

Any course work must to be submitted as a hard copy AND in electronic form. All students must submit an electronic copy of each piece of written work to www.turnitin.com. Instructions will be provided to you in class.

Penalties for confirmed cases of plagiarism are severe and are dealt with by the Director, NYU Sydney, not your instructor. Your home school will be notified and you will be dealt with according to the standards of that school. The codes of conduct and academic standards for NYU’s various schools and colleges are outlined in the respective school’s academic resources.

**Required Text(s)**

Every week a number of mandatory readings are set; both primary texts, and secondary readings from the field of eco-criticism. Films will be screened prior to seminar discussions, in screenings arranged by NYU Sydney. Note that although readings are assigned to specific weeks, many are relevant to a wide range of sections in the course. In the latter section of the semester students will deliver a presentation, and as a part of this presentation, they will assign one additional reading to be completed for that week. The readings will be made available through [online forum] or the NYU library. With reference to the novels, you may work from
editions other than those that are listed here.

**Principal Theoretical Texts:**

**Films:**

**Novels and Short Fictions:**

**Supplemental Texts(s) (not required to purchase as copies are in NYU-L Library)**
Additional supplementary materials to be posted in the online discussion group, and are listed below for those who wish to read ahead.

**Internet Research Guidelines**
None

**Additional Required Equipment**
None.
Introduction, and course outline explained. What, and where, is nature?

Reading and/or Screenings to be Completed:

What is an ecology, and how is it distinguishable from an environment? How are texts like habitats, and habitats like texts—or, in fact, are they nothing alike? In the extended introduction to this course we examine ecological practices of reading, and ask whether ‘green consciousness’ is necessarily compatible with literary modes of knowing the world. We will demonstrate some of these ideas with reference to a passage from Virginia Woolf’s novel *Mrs. Dalloway* (1925), provided in-class.

Reading and/or Screenings to be Completed:

Informal Assignment:
*Bring to class an object that speaks to a complex of environmental, ‘natural’ and cultural attributes. You will be asked to explain this object to your colleagues, in terms of a constructivist understanding of environmental values.*
Some kinds of writing and art have traditionally been understood to be the ‘right’ mediums for environmental themes. Which kinds, and why? We distinguish a materialist examination of textual form, from a historical contextualisation of environmental writing. In this seminar we will focus only on materialities; that is, the physical stuff of poetry, prose, art and cultural production.

**Reading and/or Screenings to be Completed:**
Haiku by Matsuo Bashô, Mizuta Masahide, and Oshima Ryota, distributed in-class.
Lamb, Alan. “The Wires” (sound-recording: to be provided in class). See also http://wiredlab.org/participants/alan-lamb/

**Week 2, Seminar 2: A Short History of Environmental Form— the Sublime**

Remaining in the survey mindset, we undertake a discussion of the first of our Big Modes of environmental knowledge: the sublime. How has the sublime been reconfigured by the destruction of nature (ideologically, and physically)? Can the sublime provoke us to new postures in ecological thought, or does it persist in inscribing environmental ‘otherness’?

**Reading and/or Screenings to be Completed:**
Clark—“Romantic and Anti-Romantic” (Chapters 1, 2, 3, and 4). *The Cambridge Introduction to Literature and the Environment*. pp. 13-54.

**Week 3, Seminar 1: A Short History of Environmental Form— the Uncanny**

In opposition to the sublime, we consider the uncanny. Unlike the sublime, with its axiomatic relationship with nature and its place in a history of the outdoors, uncanniness is more readily associated with *anti-natural* concerns—degrees of deadness; animated corpses, ghosts, and artificial beings; dolls, automatons and doubles. But ecology shares common ground with the
uncanny through the etymology of the “home”: “eco-,” from the Greek οἶκος, “house” or “household”; and the uncanny, a psychological and aesthetic category expressed as das unheimliche (“the unhomely”). Here we examine a counter-tradition of the uncanny in ecocriticism, and contemporary environmental philosophy more broadly.

**Reading and/or Screenings to be Completed:**

11 September 2012 | Tuesday 3:30pm—5:00pm
**Week 3, Seminar 2: Ecocriticism and the Uncanny (cont).**

We continue our discussion of the uncanny in ecocriticism with a sustained focus on the first of our principle texts, Don DeLillo’s novel *White Noise*. Many of you will have come across this text in previous courses, and will be familiar with Jack Gladney’s experience of the “Airborne Toxic Event”. Consider specifically the uncanny dynamics of environmental threat in this novel, and how such threats are animated by ecological awareness.

**Reading and/or Screenings to be Completed:**

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**Session 4**

This is a catch up class. Time TBA.

**Alternative date and time to be set in Week 4 to accommodate Student Internship.**

**Week 4, Seminar 1: A Short History of Environmental Form—Gendered Nature**

Historically, has nature been rendered feminine, masculine, heteronormative or queer? Are these useful distinctions to examine, or do they further problematicise a constructivist reading of nature?

**Reading and/or Screenings to be Completed:**

**Alternative date and time to be set in Week 4 to accommodate Student Internship.**

**Week 4, Seminar 2: A Short History of Environmental Form—Indigenous ‘Nature’**

You are standing on a vast and undetectable artwork. Indigenous epistemologies in Australia
point to a unique access to nature, and take form through cultural, legal and social discourse. Appeals to Indigenous understandings of the environment are appeals to a specific kind of nature that is anything but ‘natural’. We critically examine this tradition in Australia, and unpack some key suppositions about Aboriginality, custodianship and ecology.

**Reading and/or Screenings to be Completed:**

**Informal Assignment:**
*In The Rocks region of Sydney you can find many places exhibiting Indigenous artworks—including the Museum of Contemporary Art Australia, Gannon House Gallery, and only a short walk away, the Art Gallery of New South Wales. After completing the readings for this week, find an artwork that speaks to Indigenous notions of nature, and include your reflections on that artwork in your note-taking for this week.*

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**Session 5**

25 September 2012 | Tuesday 2:00pm—3:30pm.

**Week 5, Seminar 1: The Edge of Nature—In the Garden**

Ecocriticism has typically avoided getting grubby in the yard, preferring instead to seek the imposing nature beyond the back fence (mountains, forests, waterfalls). Nothing of any grandeur has ever burst forth spontaneously from the garden—or, if it has, we’ve always been too close to recognise it. Here several antitheses are joined: culture to nature, labour to contemplation, the man-made to the environmental. But as we’ve begun by looking at ecologies that are not just ‘natural’ but hybrid, the garden is an excellent place within which to domesticate some of our themes. In Australia the altered wild, as we have learnt in Week 4, renders many places “gardened”.

**Readings and/or Screenings to be Completed:**

**Informal Assignment:**
*In week 5 you may decide to provide an eco-critical ‘reading’ of either a public garden or a public beach (see following week). Public gardens in Sydney include: the Royal Botanic Gardens, the Chinese Garden of Friendship, Centennial Park and Ballast Point Park—*
although you might also select a private garden to which you have access. Include your reading in your notes, and later you may decide to focus an analytical paper on it.

25 September 2012 | Tuesday 3:30pm—5:00pm
**Week 5, Seminar 2: The Edge of Nature—On the Beach**

Beaches, while less conspicuously cultivated than gardens, have long been sites of eco-mythology in Australia. The ecotones between hardscape and seascape have often been cast as lyric spaces for transgression and eco-erotics. In this seminar we also foreshadow some of our later discussion around eco-apocalypse, looking at two of our principle texts in the course—Peter Weir’s movie *The Last Wave*, and Nevil Shute’s novel *On the Beach*.

**Readings and/or Screenings to be Completed:**

**Informal Assignment:**
In week 5 you may decide to provide an eco-critical ‘reading’ of either a public garden or a public beach. Sydney has a number of famous beaches stretching from the Coogee Women’s Baths, to Bondi, to Dee Why and beyond. Include your reading in your notes, and later you may decide to focus an analytical paper on it.

**SEMESTER BREAK OCTOBER 1 - 5**

09 October 2012 | Tuesday 2:00pm—3:30pm.
**Week 6, Seminar 1: The Centre of Nature—Australia’s ‘Interior’ (fictions)**

The ‘interior’ was, for a long time in Australian environmental history, considered an inscrutable, inhospitable terrain. And yet, it was filled with fictions—stories of inland seas, of landlocked reefs made entirely of gold, and the foundational lie of *terra nullius*. Sometimes the interior was silent, and sometimes it howled. We use Randolph Stow’s novel, *Tourmaline*, as a way into our discussions around the eco-mythology of the interior.

**Readings and/or Screenings to be Completed:**

**Informal Assignment:**
The Tank Stream, Australia’s most powerful colonial river, now runs right underneath us;
surfacing only in damp, mossed corners of The Rocks. Consider the absence or presence of water in an ecocritical context, and how historical water can create ecologies of meaning, even after evaporation.

09 October 2012 | Tuesday 3:30pm—5:00pm

**Week 6, Seminar 2: The Centre of Nature—Australia’s ‘Interior’ (cartographies)**

Cartography, like ecology, provides a textual means of inscribing relationships with the natural world. What tools might ecocriticism extract from map-making, and in particular, how might we use those tools in an ecocritical reading of Australia’s ‘emptied’ (or ‘storied’) central zones.

**Readings and/or Screenings to be Completed:**
Maps: ‘The Great River or the Desired Blessing Flowing Across the Dead Level’ Thomas J. Maslen 1827; ‘van Braam. Kaart der reyse van’ Abel Tasman 1726; ‘De l’Australasie’ Robert de Vaugondy. 1756. (reproductions of which will be posted online).

**Student Presentation 1**: You may pick any area of Australian eco-mythology to focus on (or an alternative topic confirmed with the lecturer).

**ANALYTICAL PAPER 1 DUE**

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**Session 7**

16 October 2012 | Tuesday 2:00pm—3:30pm

**Week 7, Seminar 1: Amidst Nature—Toxicity & Air Pollution**

Working towards a definition of pollution in eco-critical thought, we look at toxicity as a foundational precept of ecology. How does air and water pollution confuse our ideas of an environment ‘over there’?

**Readings and/or Screenings to be Completed:**
Clark—“Science and the Struggle for Intellectual Authority”, in *The Cambridge Introduction to Literature and the Environment* pp. 141-177.

16 October 2012 | Tuesday 3:30pm—5:00pm

**Week 7, Seminar 2: Amidst Nature—Climate Change**

One type of air pollution has come to be considered the crowning environmental challenge of our modern era: carbon pollution. How do the new generation of threats posed by climate change challenge our previous assumptions about ecological meaning-making, and what new
forms or styles might this provoke in literature? We hone our discussion around Cormac McCarthy’s 2006 novel *The Road*—consider; how is *The Road* a climate change novel, as opposed to an apocalypse, or a post-nuclear novel?

**Readings and/or Screenings to be Completed:**

**Student Presentation 2**: on ecology and city; eco-spirituality; a specific type of pollution or toxicity (or an alternative topic confirmed with the lecturer).

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**Session 8**

23 October 2012 | Tuesday 2:00pm—3:30pm

**Week 8, Seminar 1: Cybernetics and the Biotic**

The techno-cybernetic and the ecological are two sides of the same coin, being both “deep” ways of understanding the world as a system of fastenings and adhesions from which the subject has difficulty being extracted. In this seminar we begin our discussion of ecological and technological networks, and how both might relate to a more granular level of textual analysis in ecocriticism.

**Readings and/or Screenings to be Completed:**

23 October 2012 | Tuesday 3:30pm—5:00pm

**Week 8, Seminar 2: Cybernetics and the Biotic cont.**

Expanding our discussion of cybernetics and the biotic, we look at James Cameron’s film *Avatar* (2009)—one of the first blockbuster movies to take advantage of immersive 3D technology. Consider throughout, the use of networks both ecological and technological, and the role of the (in)organic body.

**Readings and/or Screenings to be Completed:**
**Student Presentation 3:** Eco science-fiction, or trans-humanism in an ecocritical context (or an alternative topic confirmed with the lecturer).

**Session 9**

30 October 2012 | Tuesday 2:00pm—3:30pm  
**Week 9, Seminar 1: A Nature of Forces—Nuclear Power, Energy and Electricity**

We tend to think of ecology as involving a flow of energy and matter through a system of organic entities; in this seminar we look directly at the dynamics of such transactions, in the form of electricity and other ‘forces’. This seminar also covers a brief précis of vitalism and materialism in this context (to be distinguished from materialism in terms of text, as we discussed earlier in the semester).

**Readings and/or Screenings to be Completed:**


**Session 10**

06 November 2012 | Tuesday 2:00pm—3:30pm  
**Week 10, Seminar 1: Redemptive Nature—Apocalypse**

Picking up on some of the threads we left unravelled in our earlier examination of McCarthy’s
The Road, we turn to apocalyptic nature. How does nature redeem a world in End Times, and to what extent does this accord with specific religious understandings of the natural world? Our focus text for this section of the course is Alfonso Cuarón’s 2006 movie, The Children of Men.

Readings and/or Screenings to be Completed:

06 November 2012 | Tuesday 3:30pm—5:00pm
Week 10, Seminar 2: Redemptive Nature—Regional Placemaking.

The local, as we saw in our seminar on scale, is a powerful creed in eco-criticism. Proceeding from the redemptive nature we discussed in respect to apocalyptic narratives, we turn to ‘bioregionalism’ in ecocriticism. Our text for close reading is Australian author Tiffany Carrie’s pastoral novel Everyman’s Rules for Scientific Living. This section of the course also feeds into our following week, looking at American ecocriticism’s über text: Walden, by Henry David Thoreau.

Readings and/or Screenings to be Completed:

Student Presentation 5: eco-consumerism (unless covered earlier), eco-feminism or the ethics of place-making (or an alternative topic confirmed with the lecturer).

DRAFT RESEARCH ESSAY DUE (Optional)

Session 11

13 November 2012 | Tuesday 2:00pm—3:30pm
Week 11, Seminar 1: EcoPolitics

What is the relationship between writing, thinking, being in the world and acting? In this week’s seminars we look at eco-politics, specifically the dynamics of ‘retreat’ and engagement. Is Thoreau’s model in Walden (“I went to the woods because I wished to live deliberately, to front only the essential facts of life, and see if I could not learn what it had to teach, and not, when I came to die, discover that I had not lived”) a sustainable way of addressing eco-injustice?
Readings and/or Screenings to be Completed:
Clark—“The Boundaries of the Political”. *The Cambridge Introduction to Literature and the Environment* pp. 73-140.

13 November 2012 | Tuesday 3:30pm—5:00pm
**Week 11, Seminar 2: EcoPolitics / Eco-Erotics**

The ecological, being interested in the unconscious and the instinctual, the embodied and the interchangeable, is inherently erotic. But what role has desire to play in a non-human field—can inner longings find expression environmentally? How is eroticism imagined elementally? We look at Luc Besson’s movie *The Big Blue* as a feature text for examining the eco-erotic and then at Peter Goldsworthy’s *Wish*, as a bridging text to the next section of the course on animals.

Readings and/or Screenings to be Completed:

**Student Presentation 6**: Eco-erotics or eco-injustice with a specific focus on comparisons between Australian and American topologies, such as the forest or rivers (or an alternative topic confirmed with the lecturer).

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Session 12

20 November 2012 | Tuesday 2:00pm—3:30pm.
**Week 12, Seminar 1: Animals (Introduction)**

How do we recognise animals? Animals have a history of their own, which may only sometimes incur upon our history. How do we give voice to the non-human in literature, art and other forms of cultural expression? In Week 12 of the course we look to animals—wild, electric, companion and edible. This section is the course is motivated by an inquiry into other forms of consciousness, as ecological thinking so compels us to do.

Readings and/or Screenings to be Completed:
Abstract animals are all very well, but what about the animals that consider us prey? How do we reconcile “instinctual” nature, and the unknowability of animals? Werner Herzog has certain ideas, which he expounds in his documentary on self-confessed ‘Grizzly Man’ Timothy Treadwell.

Readings and/or Screenings to be Completed:
Johnson, David T. “You Must Never Listen To This”: Lessons on Sound, Cinema and Mortality from Herzog’s *Grizzly Man.* Film Criticism, 32.3 (2008): 68-82.

Student Presentation 7: companion species, extinction, insect consciousness, zoos, parasites (or an alternative topic confirmed with the lecturer).

ANALYTICAL PAPER 2 DUE

Session 13

November 27

From animals that eat us, to the animals we eat. How does ecocriticism deal with the consumption of other living things? Has eating become an eco-political act, or was it always so?

Readings and/or Screenings to be Completed:

Informal Assignment:
Regardless of whether you personally identify as an omnivore, a pescetarian, a vegetarian or a vegan, pick one meal this week and describe all the processes that have bought it to your table. You might like to draw a diagram or a timetable. How many of these processes are culturally proscribed, how many are ‘natural’ and how many are industrial? Could you still make this meal, by hand, if you had to?

27 November 2012 | Tuesday 3:30pm—5:00pm
**Week 13, Seminar 2: EcoHistory**

Having undertaken 13 weeks of looking at eco-critical genres, ideologies and mythologies, we take a quick intellectual ‘jog’ through some interesting moments in ecohistory: from the animal trials of the thirteenth century, to Shakespearian storms, to the New Ageism of the 1990s, this seminar will be directed by your interests in the periodization of ecocriticism.

**Readings and/or Screenings to be Completed:**
TBA.

**Student Presentation 8: Animal rights, plant consciousness, or a specific area in eco-history (or an alternative topic confirmed with the lecturer).**

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**Session 14**

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<th>03 December 2012</th>
<th>Monday 10:30am—12 noon.</th>
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<td><strong>Week 14, Seminar 1: Text as a response to crisis</strong></td>
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Why write when there is so much digging to be done? In this final week of the semester, we address head-on the question of literary activism, and how some authors have viewed the discipline of writing as a strangely ecological act.

**Readings and/or Screenings to be Completed:**

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<th>04 December 2012</th>
<th>Tuesday 3:30pm—5:00pm</th>
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<td><strong>Week 14, Seminar 2: Concluding remarks</strong></td>
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Feedback from students, and a general wrap up on the themes and vocabularies developed throughout the course. Together we will list the questions opened by the course that remain unanswered or debatable, as a directive for future research.

**FINAL RESEARCH ESSAY DUE**

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**Classroom Etiquette**

This is a seminar course and requires active participation. It also requires respectful and engaged discussion, including listening to and respecting other points of view.

**Required Co-curricular Activities**

All media discussed and screened in class are required to be viewed in full outside class by students.
Your Instructors

Rebecca Giggs received her PhD in ecological philosophy and fictocritical writing from the University of Western Australia. She has subsequently lectured at UWA, at Notre Dame University, at the University of Technology Sydney, and at the University of Sussex, as a guest of the Centre for Creative and Critical Thought. She has undertaken research at the University of Western Sydney, and has a number of publications in the field. She is also an author of fiction.